DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 451 436 CG 030 802

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TITLE The Implication of the Intifada on the Personality and Behavior of Palestinian Children between 6-16.
PUB DATE 2001-00-00
NOTE 25p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Affective Behavior; *Children; Community Support; Comparative Analysis; Depression (Psychology); Emotional Adjustment; Family Relationship; Foreign Countries; *Psychological Needs; Resilience (Personality); Sex Differences; Surveys; Violence; War
IDENTIFIERS *Intifada; Palestinians; Refugee Camps; Traumas

ABSTRACT

This paper considers the impact of the Palestinian second uprising on the emotional and psychological aspects of the lives of Palestinian children. It attempts to shed light on changes that occurred in children's behavior during the Intifada. Children ages 6 through 16, living in villages and refugee camps, completed a questionnaire which looked at their sleep patterns; fears; anxieties; dreams; and drawings since the Intifada. The results are categorized into ten aspects that represent basic factors that form the personality of the Palestinian children. The results showed 80% of the children was prone to depression and lacked confidence in fathers and authority figures. Both males and females in the villages and camps reported educational problems and had psychological problems because of the violence they experienced. Violence had also left negative physical aspects on the children. A drawback in mental and perceptional development was noted for both males and females. Furthermore, the study revealed that no negative changes were found in terms of family relations or in family solidarity. In general, the children who coped best were those who were able to receive support and encouragement from their family and community. (Contains 20 references.) (JDM)

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ED 451 436

The Implication of the Intifada on the Personality and Behavior of Palestinian Children Between 6-16

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Abstract

This study tackled the impact of the Palestinian second uprising on the emotional and psychological aspects of life of Palestinian children. My main concern was the children between the age of 6and 16 and the aim was to understand the changes that occurred in the children's behavior and try to direct to in a more positive manner to give the children more understanding of what is happening around them. I sought to minimize the psychological damage which has a long-lasting effect on them.

The study comprised of a questionnaire on the behavioral changes that have occurred to the children during the intifada. The questions dwelt on the children's sleep, fear, anxiety, dreams, drawing etc. one major result was that children were preoccupied with the confrontation with Israeli soldiers. Their fears were no longer about dogs, wild animals and the dark. The questionnaire was distributed among children in villages, and refugee camps due to rampant poverty in these places.

Introduction

While in many parts of the world, children enjoy freedom, stability protection, security, safety, Palestinian children are deprived of needs for survival and success. They are always under constant pressure and stress due to darkness of the occupation.

In Palestine, children, boys and girls, have and do not know the meaning of adolescence. By eight or 10, they are helping their families: fathers and mothers on the farm or in the house. Many of Palestinian children, early school leavers, under the age of 14, work towards supporting their families: mechanics' helpers, messengers or in mills and factories, restaurants or in agriculture or newspaper sellers. And by 14 are imprisoned by the Israeli military occupation. Thus who does not envy the Palestinians? They might be envied because they still have something to fight for, a reason to live, challenges and ideology.

Palestinian children have been involved in some kind of violent confrontation with Israeli troops since 1967. Several studies and research papers have been conducted on children[1]. Those studies singled out specific ages. So far there has not been a single which proved the extent of fulfilling the children's psychological needs as a comparative study between the two sexes by using the Projection Test on children to uncover the psychology of the Palestinian child's personality in indirect ways. The test is used by explaining the subject to the children (C A T). One of the West Bank statistics showed that there were 140,300 children under the age of four, 121,600 children between five and nine, and 261,900 children under ten. From a sample of 128 West Bank children, 87 percent had been involved in confrontation with Israeli troops armed with automatic weapons and tear gas. This was one of the findings of a

study of the emotional life of Palestinian children conducted before the intifada, in 1982, by a Finnish researcher, Baija Lee Punamaki[2]. She also found that 2 thirds of the Palestinian children had a family member in prison and 40 percent had a relative wounded. Therefore, a generation of Palestinian has been growing and exposed to violence of the Israeli occupation of West Bank and Gaza since 1967; generations have been suffering the effects of war both directly and indirectly, through death, beatings, deportation of relatives, imprisonment of them or family members and closure of schools and community institutions. The Israeli violence has left its impact on the physical, mental, psychological health of Palestinian child.

Although there was a lot of information on education and impact on children, there was a dearth of information about the psychological and socioeconomic effects of the prolonged occupation and violence. Due to this lack of interest for more than two decades, the mental and psychological health has always been on the down side for the Palestinian children[3].

Between December 9, 1987, when the intifada began, and May 30, 1991, 125 Palestinian aged 16 or younger, 49 were shot dead: one was beaten to death, one was burned and 35 died because of exposure to high concentration of tear gas.

There are anything between 13,000 and 20,000 injured Palestinian children under the age of 16, let alone hundreds of miscarriages because of tear gas. The exact number of Palestinian children killed or injured will probably never be known. In many cases injured children are not taken to medical centers for treatment for fear that they might be arrested by the occupation forces.[4]

However, it is safe to say that the figures do not tell the whole story about the conditions of children under the occupation. A generation of Palestinians is growing up exposed to violence as a way of life, suffering from the effects both directly and indirectly, through death, beatings, imprisonment of them or of the family members and closure of schools and community institutions. It has become of great importance to study the psychological and emotional life of children during the last 4years. This was because children under 16 made up nearly half the population.

When the first intifada started in 1987, and because children have were the brunt of the intifada, psychologists, social workers, child welfare professionals, and educators started to examine the effect of war situations on Palestinian children, in terms of holding conferences and seminars, in June 1990, Sigumund Freud Center for Study and Research in Psychoanalysis, at the Hebrew University, sponsored an international conference entitled "Children in War". The participants tackled ways of preventing negative, long –lasting effects of war on children. Concomitant with the conference were films on children in war and exhibition of children's drawings "Visions of Peace and War".

Dr. Cairo Arafat of the East Jerusalem Early Childhood Resource Center addressed some of the dilemmas faced by the Palestinian families who may support the intifada politically but feel a great ambivalence about what it is doing to their children [5].

It was also found that the intifada has had both negative and positive impacts on children. Some Palestinian children, buffeted by the war with the occupation, have grown up stronger, more mature and life-affirming. These children have achieved a feeling of confidence and self

respect. On the other hand, other Palestinian children have been deeply and lastingly scared if and when they see soldiers or shots in the air.
Another psychiatrist, Dr. Eyad es-Sarraj, argued that intifada had triggered "a rebellion against all forms of authority" parents and Israeli occupation.

In July 1989, four main women's unions in the Occupied Territories in conjunction with international children's organizations, organized a conference on the effects of violence on children.

A conference on Palestinian children was also held in May 1988. Palestinian community leaders and educators sought to pinpoint the hidden effects of the Israeli violence on the psychological health of the Palestinian child. The speakers concluded that the society, family and school can do a lot to minimize the psychological and mental damage on children [6].

The conference found that, although there was a lot of information on education and the impact on children in this sector, there was a dearth of information about the psychological and socio-economic effect of the prolonged occupation and violence [7]. Dr. Sharif Kanaanneh analyzed the psychological impact of the violence on Palestinian children below the age of 12. He found both positive and negative outcomes to the children's involvement in the intifada.

Some of the children achieved a feeling of confidence and self respect. The psychological health of some children (average Palestinian children) was found better than what it was before the intifada. Other children suffered psychologically because of the violence in the deprived areas. It was found that the positive and the negative aspects were the greatest especially in the refugee camps and remote villages[8].

Those children who had coped best were those who had received support and encouragement from the family and the community. Those least able to cope and who accordingly suffered psychological change, included: children who were seriously injured; children forbidden to participate by their parents when other children died; young children in cases when soldiers and settlers attached homes and beat and insulted all members of the family, particularly if the older members showed fear; children who were left behind when adults fled; children in cases where violence and destruction affected all members of a community destroying the child's world, as in the village of Beita near Nablus[9].

Since the children under 16 make up nearly half the population of the Occupies Palestinian Territories, it has become of great importance to study the psychological and emotional life of children (6-16) during the last few months.

This study focused on emotional life of the Palestinian child, the outward signs of the effects of the intifada on the Palestinian child: games and drawings. It is obvious that the youngsters have become very tense and solitary with so many problems of bedwetting and nightmares.

I wanted in the paper to see whether it was possible to disentangle the children's conflicts that cause them, in the Occupied Territories, in particular.

A question that has always been asked is "Why do Palestinian parents let their children out into confrontation?". Since the average Palestinian family, numbering five children in the West Bank, and seven in Gaza, lives as an extended family, sometimes in two rooms with ten people or more per room, the Palestinian children are under constant pressure from the surrounding environment. They don't have leggo-blocks or crayons, or, say (a shortage of toys and equipment), very little

to keep them at home. The hard earned money saved by the family, to be spent on buying toys, and meeting the children's needs is usually paid as a fine to the Israeli military authorities once they make arrests of children. They do not release the kids unless the fine is paid. They go outside to find soldiers waiting for them.

During the curfews, usually power is cut off, so there is no T.V. either, thus children find themselves under pressure that they insist on going outside, and thus violate the strict curfews which might endanger their lives and cost their parents heavy fines.

Method of study

The research revolves around the extent of fulfilling the psychological needs of the Palestinian child under unusual circumstances (demonstrations, clashes, bombings, strike days and curfews), by different psychological means and ways.

The first way is the application of a questionnaire which include question about the psychological needs of the child such as the need for care and welfare and orientation, the need for freedom, the need to accomplish the future dreams of the children and the need for playing and security.

The need was defined as lacking something, but if available, it would bring survival, satisfaction, relaxation for the living creature. The need is a necessary thing; the need for love and warmth is also necessary for life in a better way.

Failing to fulfill the needs, the child will become ill-fit. The need does direct the behavior of the living creature towards satisfying them.

The second way is conducting an interview about psychology of the child to form a relationship between the child and the researcher.

The third way includes the application of Projection Test to reveal the psychology of the child's personality. This Thematic Perception Test C.A.T. consisted of 10 cards. The examinee would contemplate or ponder over the picture and construct an imaginative story about it this would reflect his growth, projections and dynamics of his behaviour. He is left for 5 minutes to construct the story about each picture. The examiner, in his turn, records of the examinee's behavior unfolding of his ideas according to the numbers of pictures. The cards are then classified in four groups. Two cards are applied on males and females below 14 years old. There is also a white card and eleven cards suitable for the two sexes. It is possible to apply ten pictures according to circumstances and need of the case.

Importance of study

Most theories of psychological education maintain that 60 percent of the child's personality is formed between 6-16. And if we take these theories, we will see the extent of the grave negative effects that affect the building of the Palestinian child's personality as a result of circumstances of subdue and depravity, let alone the lack of bottom line pertinent to the psychological and psychological needs of childhood.

Since December 1987, the Palestinian people have been experiencing a new stage, the outcome of many years of occupation. Its causes are the social, psychological, political and economic aspects of the people. What is happening now is a new situation and a new phenomenon

or we call it "a new experience" that has had impacts upon the society and has caused reaction from individuals and groups.

It is possible for any new situation, in the life of a human being, to generate pressure. The severity of the pressure varies from one individual to another. Such pressures require the individuals and groups to encounter and adjust.

The Palestinian children are always subject to measures that leave negative effects upon their psychology, Moreover, they are also subject, along with the elders, to siege and curfews, storming of their schools, beatings and shooting. All these acts terrorize and terrify the children.

The practices against the child directly-arrest and beating-and indirectly against his family deeply affect negatively his behavior and cause accumulations, concerns which appear on his face. These things acquire a chronic existence. We see a whiff of early manhood on lines of his face.

The Palestinian child is older than his age. He participates in the concerns and responsibility of home and its future. Many times, we find him suffering from anxiety and insomnia. And a question comes to mind: what are the differences between the extent of fulfilling the needs of the Palestinian child and the needs of the child in the world?

In our homeland, we find the difficult circumstances under which the child is living. These children are even deprived of their basic physiological needs which made them feel real suffering to the extent that they started to participate to secure their survival and solve their problems instead of aspiring to a sweet candy or game. They aspired to search for work, at the expense of their happiness and childhood, in order to pay the electricity bills, taxes, and water bills. This is the picture that we see in the Palestinian refugee camps.

Moreover, the schools at present do not work to eradicate letter illiteracy. They do not assume the task of directing, orienting and readying the children for future challenges. This is in addition to the failure of the home and buys parents who seek to earn the family's sustenance in this dire economic situation without offering the child any welfare and care required for his personality and growth. The parents do not also take into consideration the policy of family planning in line with financial the situation.

Impact of the Gulf War on Children

It was found that 80% of children between 4-11 were prone to depression in the future, let alone the lack of confidence in fathers who represent the superego-father, ruler, (authority). The child, therefore, grows psychologically retarded; his growth remains not proper. In terms of confidence, the child will become unable to hold responsibility as any normal child. This is because he suffers from the feeling of pain, anxiety, subduing thoughts. He lives in fear and is always pessimistic about the future.

The bitter experience through which the Palestinian Arab child had lived will make him reject everything called Arabism, ruler or father. Pertaining to the rule of teachers in restoring the child's confidence in himself, and confidence for all of the society, Munir pointed out that what had happened was an individual mistake. The shortcoming was not in Arabism, out close ties or ideals.

Wajih Faris, consultant of medical therapy at Bahman hospital, in Egypt, asks "what is the torn Arab child's attitude as a result of the violent shock?". In his words, "the effects of this shock on children were

both psychological and physical". The physical was in terms of torture inflicted on children such as deprivation, hunger, homelessness. This is in addition to the economic power from which Arab children were denied. The aspects of the psychological shock can be seen in terms of anxiety, expecting injury, death, lack of safety and fear from the unknown.

The Arab child has his own dreams through which he makes a retrospection of his painful experience and these dreams include the nightmare of war; feeling of being pushed to the battle that war would happen again. This would be a reason for the inability to concentrate, have had dreams and get angry for trivial reasons. He also sometimes avoids any thing that might arouse his feelings, thoughts and war memories thus leading to his alienation, in terms of feelings, from others. This would mean that the child lacks any ability of feeling and sympathy or love for others. The Arab child is always haunted with unpromising gloomy future. As a human being, he has his own consciousness and ambitions and plans for the future but none of them seem to be attainable. Children in the countries which had upheld the aggression against Iraq suffered more than those whose countries had opposed the aggression from the first moment[10].

If the president represented the symbol of the fathers' picture for the people, then this picture would be necessary to form the child's conscience which will be the man's conscience in the future. A huge barrier of lack of confidence might have been formed between children and all fathers who have the same image in the former countries due to the immoral attitudes taken by them during the crisis. In the latter countries, we would find a highlighted image among children because of their heads' attitude which implied all principles of honor, values, honesty and integrity.

It should be noted here that everything has two faces: positive and negative. The children, who had lived the crisis, would grow up and they would be very careful to play a role in ruling themselves in order not to repeat this catastrophe another time.

Therefore, we expect more political awareness nation wide (Arab world). The Gulf war had rendered frustration, pessimism, loss of confidence and psychological headache.

Available statistics from many sources show that the proportion of children up to 14 reached 47% compared with 25% in the developed countries and 40% in the developing countries. This would explain that this sector's participation in the uprising children between 3-9 amounted to 29.9% taking into consideration that children from age 14 constituted 47% of the total population.

In this respect, it is worth noting here Professor Rachil Levy-Shiff's study which was done on 1,200 Israeli children between 4 and eleventh grade during the Gulf war. He found that girls and boys coped differently. According to him, girls leaned more on their parents and had dreams about losing them or their home. Boys hit other children and dreamed of killing Sadam Hussein. In his words "All behavior, including aggression, was adaptive under circumstances".

Games and Drawing the Intifada: a Constant Part of Children's Life

Games of children of the Intifada have been one of the outward signs of the effects the uprising in the West Bank is having on Palestinian children and youths. A manifestation of those games can be found in the streets of West Bank cities, camps, villages and other places where children gather.

The most popular games have been the "confrontation" between children and "soldiers". Palestinian children play Israeli soldiers rounding up Palestinian men and two groups of men face-off. On the side are the

"soldiers" with their pretend rifles. On the other are on "heroes" with their stones. With cries and guttural wounds imitating the crack of rifle shots and the boom of tear gas canisters, the groups clash, pulling apart and leaving dead and wounded on the ground. This is played with variations…

Palestinian children also play with balloons by flying them in the colors of the flag and competing for the loudest voice when singing the national songs and theme…

One could say that children are being brought up on daily images of soldiers chasing and beating Palestinian youths or firing at them or shooting tear gas canisters. The most-repeated words in children's vocabulary have to do with struggle: hajar (stone) Shebab (youths) mulathameen (masked activists) and jaish (army) and Shaheed (martyrs).

In the words of a Palestinian father "the practices of the Israeli authorities are making out children too aggressive".

Toy vendors in Jerusalem's old city said that on the last feast day, most of the children bought toy guns or pistols [11].

Pertaining to drawing, children expressed Israeli violence. It was the theme of some 90% of their paintings. The Palestinian flag was portrayed in most paintings, being held aloft by tiny hands, waving from trees, rooftops and electricity pylons.

Life of Palestinians in refugee camps was another theme. Such drawings included a blocked entrance of the camp, soldiers' jeeps being chased by stone throwers and flags of a victory round on electricity pylons. Another painting might depict a military bulldozer, a helicopter, a Palestinian martyr, a flag and demonstrations as this is the critical problem (occupation).

Politics is taken as the Palestinians' theme. Children, aged 7-13, in their paintings dealt with animals life, fairy tales, life and abstract patterns as well as politics.

A collection of 160 exhibited by Hakawati theater in Jerusalem showed that girls tended to be less interested in politics than boys. Political consciousness would begin at the age of 12[12].

Most pictures showed Palestinian with the customary symbols of imprisonment bars, chains and bleeding doves.

Political symbols intruded also in their pictures. The theme of Little Red Riding Hood in a popular one. The scene of the Hood and the wolf in the forest with a large dove flying over head is used in drawing. Another variation shows Hood screaming while a hunter takes aim at the wolf with a submachine gun.

The political implications become more competing when the same hunter drawn in the same colors with the same gun shows up in another picture firing at a group of Palestinian demonstrators.

There are other less violent and most compelling political pictures, and they were the sensitive portraits of pained Palestinian faces.

Results

After sorting out the sample of questionnaire, distributed randomly in the refugee camps, cities and villages in the West Bank, we got the following outcomes.

First, a negative change was found on the educational aspects. This change varied according to sex, and area of residence: Some 62.2% of females in refugee camps had negative educational problems in their study.

About 81.1% of males in the villages had educational problems in their schools.

Around 83% of females in villages lagged behind educationally at school. Some 80% of male students in the cities had been affected educationally at school.

And about 91.1% of female students in the cities lagged behind as a result of school closure and storming those places.

Second, psychologically, the Palestinian children were negatively affected by the intifada events:

About 11.1% of males in refugee camps had been affected psychologically because of violence.

Some 62.2% camps' females had suffered negative psychological effects.

18.9% of males in villages had suffered psychologically because of violence; 16.6% of females in villages had suffered psychological problems.

In the cities, about 26.7% of males suffered from the psychological impact of the violence.

And about 21.4% of females in the cities had psychological problems because of violence.

Third, the violence had left negative physical aspects on children as follows:

In refugee camps, 24.9% of males had suffered from physical and physiological problems while 10.9% of females had physical and physiological problems.

In the villages, 17% of males were subjected to physical and physiological violence because of the occupation compared to 25% of females.

And about 26.8% of males in the cities suffered physically and psychologically because of violence compared to 46.8% of females in the same place.

Fourth, there has been a drawback, during the intifada, in the mental development and proper perception among the subjects of the questionnaire. The percentages varied according to sex, area of residence as follows:

In the refugee camps, it was found that 22.3% of males had a drawback in the mental and perceptive development as opposed to 19% of females. In the villages, some 29.8% of males had a perceptive and development drawback compared to 25.1% of females. In the cities, it was found that 33.4% of males had problems in mental and perceptive development compared to 14.6% of females.

Fifth, in behavioral aspects, the children had been negatively affected because of intifada events and violence. It was found that 27.9% of males in refugee camps had changed their behaviors negatively in course of daily life as opposed to 16.36% among females in the same area. In villages, 23.5% of males had negative behavior in their course of daily life while 6.8% of females changed their behavior negatively. Change in behavior in the city was less than in the villages and camps. It was found that only 6.8% of males had developed negative behaviors compared to 7.2% among females.

Sixth, no negative change was found in terms of family relations and ties or blood solidarity. On the contrary, the intifada had contributed to strengthening of family ties and stabilizing this family and blood relations. The positive outcomes of the intifada on children's involvement were as follows:

In refugee camps, 88.9% of males had developed a positive change toward family relationships and the strengthening of blood ties, as opposed to 89.2% among females in the camps. In the villages, some 89.2% of males developed a positive change toward their family relationships compared to 91.7% among females. In the city, 86.7% of males developed a positive change regarding family relationships and strengthening blood ties.

Seventh, pertaining to social relations, it was found that there was little negative change during the intifada events.

It was found that 2.9% of males in refugee camps had developed a negative change regarding social relationship and social interaction compared to 16.3% among females in the same environment. Pertaining to villages, 14% of males developed a negative change toward social ties and social interaction as opposed to 00% change among females. In the cities, 13.4% of males developed a negative change concerning social interaction and social relationships as opposed to zero change among females.

Eighth, concerning fear and its negative effect on Palestinian children, the proportions differed according to sex, and place of residence. Some 33.4% of males in refugee camps showed an increase in their fear and developed new fears from a few things compared to 56.8% of females who showed similar fears.

In the villages, 19% of males developed and showed fear; they also had new fears from a few things. Pertaining to females, 16.7% of them showed fear and developed new fear. Pertaining to cities, 26.8% males showed fear and developed new ones as opposed to 64.4% of females who showed and developed new fear from new things.

Ninth, regarding the future ambitions and nature of status to be taken by the Palestinian child in the future, there was a negative change on this. Ambition and future morale declined and became low. The percentages of the negative change concerning this aspect were as follows:

In the refugee camps, 75.1% developed a drawback in their future ambitions and their determination in the future life compared to 75.6% among females who developed the same negative aspect or change. In the villages, it was found that 75.7% of males had a drawback in their future ambitions and determination to have successful life in the future whereas 75% of females developed a similar negative change. In the cities, 88.8% of males developed a drawback in their future ambitions and determination for a successful life in the future compared to 70.4% of females who had this negative change.

Tenth, there was a negative change concerning the way in which the Palestinian children performed or played their games. The kinds of games and the manner of playing have changed.

In the refugee camps, 74.9% of males developed a negative change in the kinds of games and the manner of playing them compared to 70.3% of females. In the villages, it was found that 88.5% of males had developed a negative change toward the kinds of games and the manner of playing them as opposed to 59% change among females in the same environment. In the cities, 86.7% of males had a negative change in the kinds of games and the manner of playing them while 77.5% of females had negative change in games and playing them.

Conclusion

These ten aspects represent the basic factor that forms the personality of the Palestinian child which makes him a human being capable of absorbing his surrounding and adjusting and performing his message as a productive human being working towards satisfying his state and society. These negative changes and dangerous influences, developed by children, were expected as a result of change in the educational, social and psychological conditions.

However, the patterns of education and schooling have remained without change.

Pertaining to differences in the percentage and degree of negative change among children, males and females, in the cities, villages and refugee camps, this was attributed to the high level of confrontation faced or seen by the child in the city, village or camp. For example, the negative aspects were great in the deprived areas and in those more exposed to violent confrontation in the refugee camps and remote villages. Those children who had coped best were those who received support and encouragement from the family and the community. Those least able to cope, and accordingly suffered psychological change, included: children who were seriously injured; children forbidden to participate by their parents when other children did; children, and especially very young children, in cases where soldiers and settlers attacked homes and beat and insulted all members of the family particularly if the older members showed fear; children who were left behind when adults fled; children in cases where violence and destruction affected all members of a community, destroying the child's world, as in the village of Beita after the violent, tragic clashes in April 1988.

In addition to that, consciousness and organization of work were also different among the three environments. Sex of the children was also different. The male child has more room for interaction than the female. Moreover, the male child, in the Palestinian society, enjoys more freedom of movement than his female counterpart. In short, some children, buffeted by the effects of the intifada, grew up to be strong and life-affirming, while other were deeply and lastingly scared.

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